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SOURCE Die Tat, No 337, 1949.

PEOPLE'S POLICE IN GERMANY REPORTED  
BEING CONVERTED INTO PEOPLE'S ARMY

Conversion of the People's Police into a People's Army by April or May 1950 reportedly was announced by General Chuikov shortly after the formation of the German Democratic Republic. Simultaneously compulsory military service of as yet unknown duration is to be introduced.

It is further learned that, by order of Moscow, the future German People's Army is not to exceed a strength of 350,000.

Two men will play an important role in this connection:

1. Maj Bernhard Becher, late Minister of the Interior for Land Brandenburg, former officer and member of the "Free Germany" National Committee. He recently returned from the Soviet Union where he is said to have attended a 3-months' training course at the Moscow Military Academy. He has been appointed "Instructor of the People's Police."

2. Kurt Fischer, commander of the People's Police, who recently called a staff conference for the purpose of accelerating the necessary preparations.

Although the project is formally the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior, Dr Steinhoff, currently in Moscow, its chief protagonist has been Walter Ulbricht, Deputy Minister-President.

According to information obtained, the projected German People's Army is to be divided into six group headquarters (the term division is intentionally avoided) to be located in Potsdam, Schwerin, Dresden, Weimar, and Halle. [The sixth location was not given; probably in Berlin.]

Each headquarters or command is to comprise one armored group and one group of motorized infantry. The armored group, in turn, will consist of one armored regiment, one artillery regiment, two mechanized rifle regiments, one mortar battalion, one engineer battalion, and an armored reconnaissance battalion. The People's Army is to have no air force of its own. However, it will have the opportunity of obtaining a relatively small number of Soviet aircraft whose German pilots will be trained by Soviet officers.

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Meanwhile the People's Police, as the potential framework of the future People's Army, is being given intensive training. Its members draw the very high pay of 400 to 600 marks per month. They receive excellent maintenance and treatment.

Quarters are generally adequate for the requirements of a modern army. The garrisons in the environs of Berlin, such as Bernau, Oranienburg, Zossen, Potsdam-Eiche, Straussberg, Storkow, etc., are filled to capacity. Strangely enough, the majority of the policemen come from Thuringen and Sachsen. Following basic training, each unit of 100 men is detailed for special courses with the various branches of service. When this stage is reached, theory, which constitutes about 50 percent of the basic training program, loses a good deal of its importance. "Theory," as it applies to the People's Police, constitutes a training course in "the elimination of bourgeois trends of thought by means of arousing awareness of class-conscious objectives and aims according to the ideas of Lenin and Stalin." This philosophical orientation is in the hands of reliable Communists and discharged prisoners of war, most of whom have completed 7 months' training under the supervision of a Soviet, Colonel Sudorov.

Special attention is given the training of officers. Labor offices in Soviet Zone Germany have been instructed to urge former young officers recently discharged as prisoners of war to enlist in the People's Police.

Former officers who are over 27 years of age are subject to particularly intensive observation and theoretical training in order to prevent possible backsliding into the political ideology of Hitler's armed forces. Less apprehension is felt in the case of high-ranking officers, nearly all of whom served in the military forces of the Third Reich, for, because of their exposed position, they can be watched more readily. The main officers' training camp, located in the vicinity of Dessau, is directed by Colonel Sudorov and a German, Oberpolizeirat von Witzleben. The instructors are hand-picked representatives of the Socialist Unity Party's Central Committee.

The People's Police of Soviet Zone Germany is a powerful weapon of the German Republic east of the Elbe. This circumstance, it is said, leads to top-level differences and tensions which are quite beyond the imagination of the subordinate members of the People's Police. The controversies allegedly arise from the fact that the political leadership's concept of the purpose and mission of the People's Police differs totally from that of the military leaders who, at least for the present, are inclined to look upon the organization as a neutral instrument for the protection of the state.

The political representatives of the People's Police are General Zeisler, a close adherent to the Communist line who, as "General Gomez," became famous in the Spanish Civil War; Staimer, a son-in-law of the President of the East German Republic; and Heinrich Rau, former president of the German Economic Commission.

These men look upon the People's Police not only as an instrument for the attainment and protection of political achievements, but also, as Staimer expressed it, as "an instrument in the struggle for liberation from the West German oppressors." In plain words, the People's Police is to be used as an instrument of civil war, should the necessity arise.

The military, however, have entirely different ideas on the subject. Since the majority of the higher-ranking officers are ex-members of the former National Committee for a Free Germany, they cling to the concepts formulated in the last throes of the Third Reich as tenaciously as they once clung to Hitler's world views.

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